



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: FEBRUARY 3, 2005

California Issues First Licenses for Naturopathic Doctors

Department of Consumer Affairs' New Bureau of Naturopathic Medicine Expands Activities

SACRAMENTO – The California Department of Consumer Affairs' Bureau of Naturopathic Medicine has issued the first batch of state licenses for naturopathic doctors, offering a new choice to Californians interested in naturopathic care.

"We're excited about bringing the benefits of state consumer-protection resources and professional licensing to the practice of naturopathic medicine," said Director Charlene Zettel of the Department of Consumer Affairs. "Californians interested in naturopathic care will be able to choose a licensed naturopathic doctor."

2003 legislation directed the Department of Consumer Affairs to establish the Bureau of Naturopathic Medicine last year. The bureau enforces the Naturopathic Doctors Act, promulgates regulations relating to the profession and develops licensing standards. It recently made the first license application packet available to prospective naturopathic doctors, and the first 22 have been issued licenses.

Naturopathic medicine is a distinct, comprehensive system of primary health care practiced by a naturopathic doctor for the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of human health conditions, injuries, and disease.

Kathy McKeever, Chief of the Bureau of Naturopathic Medicine, said: "Licensing assures that a naturopathic doctor has met the minimum professional standards and passed required examinations. To maintain their license, doctors must also meet ongoing educational requirements that help them stay current with professional practices."

The bureau estimates about 200 individuals statewide could initially meet licensing standards, which are similar to the qualifications required for membership in California Naturopathic Doctors Association (CNDA).

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Initially, the basic requirements for qualification as a naturopathic doctor are graduation from an approved naturopathic medical school and, with limited exceptions, passing the Naturopathic Physicians Licensing Examinations administered by the North American Board of Naturopathic Examiners. The bureau also conducts a criminal background check on applicants.

On an ongoing basis, licensed naturopathic doctors must follow the laws and regulations pertaining to naturopathic medicine. During the second and subsequent two-year licensing periods, naturopathic doctors will be required to complete 60 hours of approved professional continuing education.

Only licensed professionals can legally call themselves “naturopathic doctor,” “licensed naturopathic doctor” or “doctor of naturopathic medicine.” Licensed naturopathic doctors can prescribe drugs using standardized procedures or protocols established jointly with a supervising licensed physician and surgeon. However, naturopathic doctors are not “medical doctors,” “M.D.s” or “physicians.”

The Bureau of Naturopathic Medicine is the designated resource for receiving and investigating consumer complaints against naturopathic doctors. Consumers will be able to contact the bureau to check the license status of a naturopathic doctor. More information on the laws and regulations pertaining to naturopathic medicine is available at the bureau’s Web site, www.naturopathic.ca.gov.

If the bureau determines that a naturopathic doctor has violated any applicable laws and regulations, various disciplinary actions can be pursued, including issuing citations and fines. In cases involving more serious violations, the bureau may seek to suspend or revoke the naturopathic doctor’s license.

Naturopathic doctors are restricted from performing certain medical procedures, such as surgery, performed by other licensed health care professionals. They must meet additional requirements to provide some services, such as childbirth attendance.

The Naturopathic Medicine Advisory Council has been established to help guide the bureau, with its nine unpaid members appointed by the governor and the Legislature. The Advisory Council is comprised of naturopathic doctors (among the first batch of doctors licensed recently by the bureau), medical doctors and public members.

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